

IRS News Release

Media Relations Office

Washington, D.C.

Media Contact: 202.622.4000

www.irs.gov/newsroom

Public Contact: 800.829.1040

Free Tax Help Available Nationwide

Video: EITC: [English](#) | [ASL](#)

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WASHINGTON — Nearly 12,000 free tax preparation sites will be open nationwide this year as the Internal Revenue Service continues to expand its partnerships with nonprofit and community organizations performing vital tax preparation services for low-income and elderly taxpayers.

The IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program offers free tax help to people who earn less than \$49,000. The Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) Program offers free tax help to taxpayers who are 60 and older.

Today, partners and local officials will be hosting news conferences or issuing news releases nationwide to highlight the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and their free tax preparation programs. The EITC is already the government's largest cash assistance program targeted to low-income Americans. However, not all eligible taxpayers may be aware or claim the EITC.

Taxpayers need to bring to the VITA/TCE sites the following items:

- Photo identification
- Valid Social Security cards for the taxpayer, spouse and dependents
- Birth dates for primary, secondary and dependents on the tax return
- Current year's tax package, if received
- Wage and earning statement(s) Form W-2, W-2G, 1099-R, from all employers
- Interest and dividend statements from banks (Forms 1099)
- A copy of last year's federal and state returns, if available
- Bank routing numbers and account numbers for direct deposit
- Other relevant information about income and expenses
- Total paid for day care
- Day care provider's identifying number

To file taxes electronically on a Married Filing Jointly tax return, both spouses must be present to sign the required forms.

Trained community volunteers can help eligible taxpayers with all special credits, such as the EITC, Child Tax Credit or Credit for the Elderly. Also, many sites have language specialists to assist people with limited English skills.

In addition to free tax return preparation assistance, most sites use free electronic filing. Individuals taking advantage of the e-file program will receive their refunds in half the time compared to returns filed on paper. Taxpayers who use e-file and direct deposit can receive their refund in as few as 10 days. This year, taxpayers also can use the refunds to purchase U.S. Savings Bonds.

Taxpayers who file electronically also can opt to file now and pay later. If taxpayers owe, they can make a payment April 15 by authorizing an electronic funds withdrawal (direct debit) from a checking or savings account, paying by credit (Discover Card®, American Express®, MasterCard® or VISA® Card), or by check or money order (made out to the United States Treasury) using Form 1040-V, Payment Voucher.

As part of the IRS-sponsored TCE Program, AARP offers the Tax-Aide counseling program at nearly 7,000 sites nationwide during the filing season. Trained and certified AARP Tax-Aide volunteer counselors help people of low-to-middle income with special attention to people age 60 and older. To locate the nearest AARP Tax-Aide site, call 1-888-227-7669 or visit AARP's Internet site.

The military also partners with the IRS to provide free tax assistance to military personnel and their families. The Armed Forces Tax Council (AFTC) consists of the tax program coordinators for the Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard. The AFTC oversees the operation of the military tax programs worldwide, and serves as the main conduit for outreach by the IRS to military personnel and their families. Volunteers are trained and equipped to address military specific tax issues, such as combat zone tax benefits and the effect of the EITC guidelines.

For taxpayers who want to prepare and e-file their own tax returns, there is IRS Free File. This is a free service offered by approximately 20 companies who make their software available for free. Taxpayers with incomes of less than \$57,000 are eligible to use Traditional Free File, which is the easy-to-use, interview-style software. For people with incomes of more than \$57,000 or people who need little assistance, there is Free File Fillable Forms. For either service, taxpayers must go through www.irs.gov/freefile to access the programs.

EITC-eligible taxpayers also can seek free assistance at the 400 IRS Taxpayer Assistance Centers nationwide. To assist EITC taxpayers, 167 IRS TACs will offer Saturday service on January 30, February 6 and February 20. A list is attached.